(xv) Reheating Furnace for HSM and Plate Mill

Major production facilities under Phase-I have already been commissioned by March, 1994.

In Phase-II, 13 indigenous packages in full and remaining 2 packages in part have been completed. In case of global packages, 4 packages in full and remaining 1 package in part have been completed.

The major production facilities under Phase-II are likely to be completed by July, 1997. Production from Hot Strip Mill is likely to commence from December, 1997 when first new HSM Reheating Furnace is commissioned. The second new HSM Reheating is likely to be completed October, by 1998.

(c) No such proposal is under consideration.

(d) Does not arise.

Sharp Decline in Sail's Profitability

*516. SHRI S.M. KRISHNA: Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item captioned 'SAIL records sharp decline in profitability' appearing in the Hindustan Taimes' dated the 24th April, 1997; if so, the reasons therefor;

(b) what are the reasons for fall in the profits of SAIL;

(c) the details regarding SAIL's budget provisions and expenditure actually incurred on input cost and market survey;

(d) whether the SAIL's inventory is piling up; if so, the steps taken to dispose of such inventory and the details of disposal undertaken during last two years ; and

(e) the steps Government have taken to improve the market condition for SAIL?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND MINISTER OF MINES (SHRI BIRENDRA PRASAD BAISHYA): (a) and (b) During the year 1996-97 SAIL had to face abnormal increase in input costs on account of cost escalation in coal price, petroleum price, railway freight, power tariff, special custom duties etc. The impact of these escalations is about Rs. 1000 crores while only a part of this impact could be neutralised through improvement in operational efficiencies. Therefore, it is expected that the profits of SAIL for 1996-97 will be less than 1995-96. Other reasons, which have affected the profitability, included decline in the international prices of steel and free imports bringing the margins under stress as also the sluggish market behaviour etc. due to which SAIL could not pass on the impact of input cost escalation to the customers.

(c) The actual expenditure incurred on input cost during 1996-97 was estimated to be Rs. 11,200 crores as against the budgeted expenditure (adjusted to the actual level of production) of Rs. 10,520 crores.

(d) and (e) The inventory with SAIL had gone up during the last two years. The steps taken to reduce the inventory are:

- SAIL has adopted a market oriented sales strategy to counter the intense competition from indigenous producers and imports;
- Adopting commercial strategies and strategic pricing depending upon market segment, competition and quantity linked purchases;
- Participating in tenders floated by Government Departments, Public Sector, Projects and Private Sector to boost up sales and thereby reduce inventory;
- Orienting product-mix to suit market needs and adjusting production as per market requirements;
- Vigorous customer contact and follow-up of individaul customer orders for affecting speedier delivery;
- Arranging stock transfer from one branch to another to meet requirements of various customers.;
- Improving after sales services, expediting refunds and settlement of quality commercial complaints; and
- SAIL made efforts to increase exports and succeeded in exporting

4,89,000 tonnes of Mild Steel and 25,000 tonnes of Special Steel during 1996-97. SAIL is trying to export a higher tonnage during 1997-98.

In this connection, the Ministry of Steel takes up requests from SAIL, on merits, with various related Government agencies from time to time.

Export of Coir products

*517. DR. MOHAN BABU:

SHRIMATI JAYAPRADA NAHATA:

Will the Minister of INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) the target of export of coir products fixed for the current financial year and the actual quantum of export made so far;

(b) the reason for decline in export thereof; and

(c) the measures taken to boost its export?

THE MINISTER OF INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) The target fixed for export for 1997-78 is Rs. 245.00 crores. In 1996-97 against a target of Rs. 211.00 crores, coir products worth Rs. 207.49 crores (provisional) have been exported.

(b) The main reasons for the shortfall in export are:—

(i) General sluggishness in international trade;

(ii) Abundant availability of attractive products made from other natural fibres such as sesal, abacca, jute, grass, etc. in the international market.

(c) The Coir Board which is a statutory body has taken various measures to boost the export of coir and coir products in the international market. The Board has undertaken joint publicity programme with British and German Coir Associations for promoting consumption of Indian Coir in these countries. In order to increase the export of coir products, the Board participates in important exhibitions abroad, deputes officials in market development missions and undertakes publicity programme.

Improvement in the quality of national statistics

*518. SHRI BRATIN SENGUPTA:

SHRI MD. SALIM:

Will the Minister of PLANNING AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have contemplated to improve the quality of national statistics and the data collected by various organisations as also to make them easily available to people; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION (SHRI YOGINDER ALAGH): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) A Statement containing the details is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

Improvement in the quality of national statistics

1. The Indian Statistical System is a decentralised system, both territorially and subject-wise. Ministries and Departments at the Centre and the Corresponding Departments in the States are responsible for collection, compilation and dissemination of statistics relating to their subject areas. The Central Statistical Organisation (CSO) in the Department of Statistics at the national level and Directorate of Economics & Statistics in the States have the responsibility of coordination of statistical activities undertaken by different Ministries/Departments. The CSO compiles and disseminate data on National Accounts Statistics, Industrial Statistics based on Annual Survey of Industries, Economic Censuses and their follow up surveys, all-India Index of Industrial Production and Consumer Price Index for Urban Non-Manual Employees. The national Sample Survey Organisation in the Department conducts annual rounds of socio-economic surveys and undertakes the field work of Annual Survey of Industries and follow up surveys of the Economic Censuses.

2. The efficiency of the statistical system is